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Goddesses of Akragas: a study of terracotta votive figurines from Sicily

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Stellingen behorend bij het proefschrift

'Goddesses of Akragas, a Study of Terracotta Votive Figurines from Sicily'

1. Terracotta female figurines produced in Sicily provide us with the best means of viewing the development of Sicilian iconographies over the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. No other locally made objects were produced in such quantity nor with such attention to detail.
2. The cultural contacts of the inhabitants of Sicily are visible in the diverse influences on the appearance of the terracotta female figurine. The iconographic study shows that the development of the figurines should be understood within this framework of religious syncretism, appropriation and exchange.
3. The number of Greek migrants had a significant impact on religious life and its material manifestation, although they recognised the local female deity and her appearance. Under their influence, figurines took on the likeness of Archaic *korai* and gained an increasingly naturalistic representation of the body.
4. The clay of Macalube di Aragona found near Akragas was used as raw material for local terracotta manufacture. With the introduction of moulds, various models of figurines became available and more affordable.
5. The method of moulding allowed coroplasts to introduce serial figurine production. Combined with other new techniques, this resulted in a rapid development of production.
6. The ornamentation represented on the figurines parallels real jewellery and dress of the time, which was part of the ritual decoration for larger-sized terracotta representations of the same goddess, such as busts. Such dress may have included the *polos* and apron, paralleling the peplos dedication to Athena Polias of Athens.
7. The moulded image of the general female figurine could be adapted with attributes to any goddess or even mortal. Contributing to the ongoing debate on the nature of the figure represented, it is proposed that the adorned figurines in Akragas represent a local female deity.
8. In the first half of the fifth century BCE, the representation of figurines shifts in focus from the receiver, the goddess, to the dedicant. This implies a shift in religious perspective and rituals.
9. Iconographic research, in this case on the figurines, distinguishes changes in symbolism. Social and cultural aspects prevail in the choice of objects to represent. This is also the case with religious material culture, not only because religion is part of culture in general, but also because religion itself functions to process conflicting aspects of society.
10. Archaeological experimentation is a means to perform research on material culture. We can come to understand material culture differently when objects or copies are handled, and their production process is reconstructed.
11. The modern-day fashion with gold jewellery, in particular with chokers, in which the disc and crescent – and to a lesser extent, the evil eye, hamsa, and saints' sigils – are frequently applied as small but multiple charms seems to be a way to appropriate religious symbols in a multicultural society, comparable with how pendants or amulets were applied to pectorals in sixth and fifth century BCE Sicily.
12. The modern-day, near ubiquitous decorative images of Buddha are more an indication of trend followers than a sign of those seeking spiritually. Yet religious symbols seem to offer something attractive, extending beyond their aesthetic aspect.